

FOR MEMBERS OF PEARL RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

TODAY

IN MISSISSIPPI

Picture This:

Cute Kiddos

STRAWBERRY
RECIPES
FOREVER

PRO HOCKEY IS
BACK IN BILOXI

25 YEARS OF
FOOD, ART
AND MUSIC

APRIL 2022

The future is bright

I'm here to tell you that our future is in good hands.

I say that because, here at the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi, we recently got a glimpse of some potential future leaders up close.

Our annual ECM Youth Leadership Workshop returned in 2022 following a year that we had to skip the program because of COVID-19.

From March 2 to March 4, 66 high school juniors from all over Mississippi gathered in Jackson to participate in team-building exercises, meet their legislators, tour the state Capitol, and hear words of encouragement from governmental leaders and motivational speakers.

The students, who represented and were sponsored by their electric cooperatives, were chosen for the workshop with assistance from high school guidance counselors and a selection process involving the cooperative community.

The juniors also earned an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June for a six-day tour to meet other student leaders from all over the country, to watch leaders in a national setting, and to see the sites in the U.S. Capitol.

Right now, it's unclear how exactly our 66 students will apply the lessons learned at the workshop. Some might choose a career in

public service; others may start businesses, while others might just use their leadership skills to give back to their local communities.

However they choose to utilize their special skills, Mississippi will be better off in the years to come because of their contributions.

These sons and daughters of Mississippi will work hard to ensure a bright future for our state.

This month's magazine also celebrates linemen — the first responders of the electric cooperatives.

April 11 is National Lineworkers Appreciation Day.

Whether restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers truly are the heart of everything we do.

Please join me April 11 to thank our lineworkers. If you are on social media, use #thankalineworker to show your support for these men and women who power our lives. 

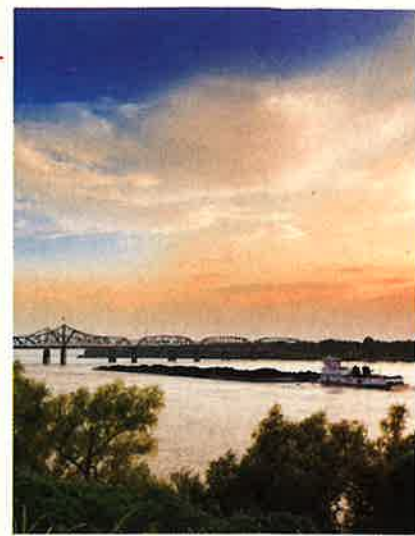


by Michael Callahan

Executive Vice President/CEO
Electric Cooperatives
of Mississippi



Elyon Ministries leads the students in team-building exercises.



Mississippi is...

*My Daddy is Ole Man River, so mighty,
my Mama is a Southern Belle, so tidy.*

*My head wears a Tennessee bonnet,
my mockingbird sings a proud sonnet.*

*I have a mirror-twin named Alabama,
and a neighbor friend named Louisiana.
My cousin, Arkansas, is to my Northwest.*

*I tour pilgrimages in a hooped dress.
My feet wade the shores of the Gulf Coast.
I'm known as the Hospitality Host.*

*My ears like B.B.'s Delta blues,
and my Elvis' gospel songs soothe.*

*My nose inhales Azaleas in bloom,
but Magnolia is my favorite perfume.*

*My eyes have seen some hard time living,
but my heart has seen some cheerful giving.*

*by Lynda O'Quinn,
a resident of Natchez and a member
of Southwest Electric*

What's Mississippi to you?

What do you treasure most about life in our state?
Send your brief thoughts to *Today in Mississippi*,
news@ecm.coop or mail to
P.O. Box 3300, Ridgeland, MS 39158

ADD VERTICAL ELEMENTS FOR *Garden Excitement*

There are some great foliage plants such as these Cordyline Red Star selections that bring vertical interest to landscapes.

On this bright, sunny morning, even though it was 30 when I got out of bed, I know for a fact that spring is almost here. That means it's time to get serious about what I'm going to plant in my home garden and landscape this year.

For sure, I'm going to take advantage of various flowering annuals and use them to create colorful carpets.

I have my favorites, from spreading annual vinca to the heat-tolerant purslane to the colorful ornamental sweet potato vines. I think seeing horizontal mats of floral color can be as relaxing as looking out on a calm pond.



One way to add excitement to a garden is to break up the mats of horizontal color with vertical plants such as these Mystic Spires salvias.

“

As enjoyable as the floral carpets can be, to have a really great planting bed, you need some excitement. That's where adding spikes of vertical color comes in. These vertical plants break up the mats of horizontal color, and vertical lines add excitement and interest.

But, as enjoyable as the floral carpets can be, to have a really great planting bed, you need some excitement.

That's where adding spikes of vertical color comes in. These vertical plants break up the mats of horizontal color, and vertical lines add excitement and interest.

My first choice for vertical color is salvia, and not just any salvia. I would pick either Mystic Spires or Indigo Spires salvia.

Indigo Spires is vigorous and produces 12 to 15 inch long, twisting spikes of dark-violet flowers. These plants have an open growth habit and can reach 4 feet tall. These are nonstop bloomers, especially when you deadhead the flower spikes as they begin to fade.

Mystic Spires, also a nonstop bloomer, has a more dense, bushy growth habit. These plants grow 18 to 30 inches tall.

Another of my favorite warm-season annuals that produces vertical flower spikes is Angelonia.

Angelonia was chosen as a Mississippi Medallion Plant twice: Serena in 2007 and Serenita in 2016. Serena Angelonias come in four colors and reach only 10 to 12 inches tall, but they spread 12 to 14 inches wide. Flower colors include blue, pink, violet, and white.

Serenita Angelonia has a more compact growth habit compared to its bigger cousin, Serena. These plants grow to 1 foot by 1 foot. They are tough, low-maintenance plants in the landscape or in containers, as they are heat-, drought-, deer- and rabbit-resistant.

Always plant Angelonia selections in well-drained garden soils. Never plant them in any soils resembling the tight clay, cement-like soils commonly found across Mississippi. These compacted soils have very little air space.

Foliage plants also serve to break up horizontal color.

There are several great options, but one of the best, in my opinion, is Red Star cordyline. The purple-red leaves are sword-like, reaching straight up to about 3 feet tall. For the best color development, plant Red Star cordyline in full sun and water consistently.

All these plants work well in containers or landscape beds.

Even though temperatures are still low, I'm seeing warm-season plants starting to arrive at garden centers. So, get out in your landscape and start planning. If you see that perfect plant, don't hesitate to make it yours. 



Serena Angelonias come in four colors and reach 10 to 12 inches tall. They thrive in well-drained garden soils.



**by Dr. Gary
Bachman**

Gary Bachman, Ph.D., Extension/Research Professor of Horticulture at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi. He is also host of "Southern Gardening" radio and TV programs. He lives in Ocean Springs and is a Singing River Electric member.

Arts Festival

Stubbs said a few changes are in store this year.

"This year we will have a larger headliner take the stage Friday night. In the past, we've had music on Friday night, but this year, Brett Young will be here, which is a larger act than we have had normally on Friday nights," Stubbs said.

Stubbs also said it's possible there won't be any Double Decker bus rides and tours this year.

"In Oxford, we have four Double Decker buses, but, at the moment, we do not have any that are currently in working condition. We are hopeful that we will have at least one bus running by the festival, but either way, the iconic bus will be on the festival grounds for photo opportunities."

In 2015, the festival started choosing a local artist to feature as the festival's official artist. Their festival art is printed on t-shirts and posters. This year's festival artist is Hannah McCormick who attended school at the University of Mississippi and has lived in Oxford for more than 15 years. Her artwork was selected for the

2020 festival, which was canceled due to COVID-19. Festival organizers decided to carry over her art for this year's festival.

Stubbs said her favorite part of the Double Decker festival is the live music.

"This will be my seventh festival to plan from start to finish, and my favorite part of the day is when the last act goes on stage," Stubbs said.

"I generally go backstage during this act and look out from the stage into the crowd. Seeing the large crowd and everyone there having fun and enjoying the music and festival gives me complete satisfaction knowing that I helped bring all these people here. It's a great way to see it go from start to finish."

The festival has always meant something special to the city of Oxford.

"To Oxford, the Double Decker Arts Festival is a reunion weekend for friends and families from all over to celebrate all the good things that Oxford has to offer, music, food, and the arts," Stubbs said. 🌸



For more information, visit
doubledeckerfestival.com
or call 662-232-2477.

The perfect FIRE

Jack London's short story, "To Build a Fire" is perhaps the most poignant tale ever written recommending preparation and the need to follow good advice. The Man had disregarded such sound advice from the Old Man at Sulphur Creek and left there alone to reach Henderson Creek Camp. Friends waited there. In the telling, London counts down degrees, beginning with 50 and ending with 75 below. Unquestionably a life-threatening situation.

As you likely know, The Man found himself freezing. His attempts at fire starting were misguided at best, and the entire affair ended in disaster. London says of him, "He was not much of a thinker."

Hopefully none of us will be caught in life-or-death struggles where fire would have saved the day. Even so, fire starting is a skill that everyone should know. Modern ingredients such as lighters and ferro rods make the chore quite simple but are no good unless one or both of these are with the one trying to start that fire. I have a lighter, a ferro rod, and an old-fashioned combo of flint and steel (along with char cloth) with me always while in the woods and fields.

That all aside and an emergency not present, fire starting is still a valid and often-used skill. For instance, camping season is under-way. Few things say camping more eloquently than an enchanting campfire. But that fire must be, in addition to safe and controlled, one that is pleasant, welcoming, not a smoky mess that foils the occasion. There are ways to mitigate smoke and create a fire that is inviting rather than repulsive.

The first step in preparation is to have good wood. Hardwood such as oak is preferable; poplar burns easily and generates admirable heat. But, poplar burns quickly. Whatever chosen should be seasoned and dry. Damp wood, whether sap-filled or rain-soaked, will make life miserable. And how you prepare — build, if you will — that fire from the very beginning is key.



The anatomy of a smokeless fire. Bottom to top: bigger splits on bottom, smaller as the tiers rise. Fat pine is a good beginning for the top kindling. Light the kindling and enjoy a pleasant fire.

I once came across instructions on building a smokeless fire. I don't know that any wood will be entirely smokeless, but after many years of following this tactic, I can say with authority that the method is much improved in the smoke department. And it begins with the proper wood as mentioned above. You will need it in varying diameters or splits. Split wood burns more easily than a solid round stick.

Begin with a bottom tier, three splits are my choice. Place them parallel but not jammed together. Move to the next tier with smaller splits and do the same —

except these will be across the ones below. Use enough to span approximately the length of that bottom tier. And a third tier, smaller splits than the second, these stacked in the same direction as the bottom tier. And so on, three or four tiers. All that remains is some fat pine chips or other easily-ignited kindling on top, maybe even a little of this dropped between the top two tiers. Light that kindling and a smokeless fire will be your reward. ❧



by Tony Kinton

Tony Kinton has been an active outdoors writer for 30 years. He lives in Carthage and is a Central Electric member. Visit www.tonykinton.com for more information.

Now, THIS is a Knife!

This 16" full tang stainless steel blade is not for the faint of heart —now **ONLY \$99!**

In the blockbuster film, when a strapping Australian crocodile hunter and a lovely American journalist were getting robbed at knife point by a couple of young thugs in New York, the tough Aussie pulls out his dagger and says "That's not a knife, THIS is a knife!" Of course, the thugs scattered and he continued on to win the reporter's heart.

Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

Secured in a tooled leather sheath, this is one impressive knife, with an equally impressive price.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99, 8x21 power compact binoculars, *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the *Down Under Bowie Knife*.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

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DR POWER EQUIPMENT





Funded by members who are rounding up their monthly bills, these scholarships are intended to assist students who will attend a Mississippi community college as a freshman this fall.

More information is available at www.prvepa.com.

Applications for Community College Scholars program due August 12, 2022

- Applications are available at PRVEPA offices and at www.prvepa.com.
- Completed applications must be postmarked or emailed by August 12.
- Scholarship recipients must be a PRVEPA member, spouse or child of a member participating in the Round Up program.
- Recipients must be full time (12 hours or more per semester) freshmen students enrolled in academic or career-technical programs.
- Scholarship funds will be credited to each student's college account — no checks will be issued to individuals.
- Scholarships should be awarded by the end of September. Students must be enrolled in good standing at the time funds are released to the colleges.

Round Up for Education

TO: THE MEMBERS OF PEARL RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED OF THE FOLLOWING: ELECTION OF DIRECTORS FOR DISTRICT 1, DISTRICT 4, AND DISTRICT 9

Notice of the election of directors, and of the qualifications of, and the manner of qualifying as, a candidate for the office of director of Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association pursuant to Mississippi House Bill 366

If you desire to be a candidate for the office of Director in one of the above Districts and if you meet the qualifications of Director as set forth below, then you may obtain an application in the form of a Petition for the candidacy to the Board of Directors at the office of Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association (hereinafter the "Association"), 1422 Highway 13 North, Columbia, Mississippi. You must obtain the signatures of at least fifty (50) members of the Association on the Petition for your nomination, and you must deliver the signed Petition to the office of the General Manager of the Association. The Association must receive the signed Petition no later than Friday, May 27, 2022. If your Petition is received by the Association by the above deadline then your Petition will be reviewed to determine compliance with this Notice and the applicable law and By-Laws of the Association. If the Petition is in such compliance, then your nomination will be placed before the members for a vote at the Annual Meeting of the Association to be held on the fourth Saturday in September 2022.

The qualifications for the office of Director of the Association are set out by Mississippi law and in the By-Laws of the Association and are as follows:

- Must be 21 years of age and have no felony convictions.
- Must be a member of the Association, receiving service therefrom at his or her primary residential abode and a resident of the district from which he or she is elected.
- May not be employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise, or a business selling electric energy to the Association, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Association.
- May not be the incumbent or a candidate for any elective county, city, ward, beat, district, or state public office.
- May not be a close relative of a director or of an employee of the Association as defined in Section 4.14 of the By-Laws.

The information contained in this Notice concerning the qualifications of a Director and the means and manner of being nominated by Petition for the office of Director is a general summary only. The complete policy for Director election is available in the Association By-Laws which may be found on the Association's website at www.prvepa.com. In the event of a conflict between the summary set out herein and the actual law and By-Laws, the provisions of the law and the By-Laws shall control.

— PEARL RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION



A. (From left to right) Sen. John A. Polk, Pearl River Valley Youth leadership students Connor Gibson and Abigail Hammons, Rep. Kent McCarty, and Rep. Joseph Tubb. **B.** Connor Gibson and Abigail Hammons take photos on the first day of the workshop. **C.** More fun photos with Abigail Hammons and Connor Gibson. **D.** Connor Gibson and Abigail Hammons stand in front of the State Capitol.



COMPOSTING

can save money, help environment

by Susan Collins-Smith

As spring approaches, gardeners may be thinking about starting a compost pile. This practice of recycling organic materials around the home can save money and help the environment.

About 30% of materials going into landfills are yard wastes, including grass clippings and leaves. The U.S. Composting Council estimates 67% of all materials, including paper materials, entering landfills can be composted.

"There's a reason gardeners call compost black gold," said Gary Bachman, horticulture specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. "You can use compost as a soil amendment, as mulch around your plants or both. When used as a soil amendment, compost adds texture and improves soil's moisture-holding capacity. Compost also returns essential nutrients to the soil.

"Thrifty gardeners will appreciate that compost is free. No more buying bags of soil conditioners and amendments," he added.

Compost, a partially broken-down form of organic waste, becomes dark and crumbly when ready to use. It makes a perfect soil conditioner that helps soils maintain proper moisture content, reduces soil compaction, increases earthworms and beneficial microorganisms, and provides a slow release of nutrients into the soil. 🌱

Size

A compost pile must be at least 3 feet wide by 3 feet high to properly decompose. Piles can be larger. For households with large amounts of organic waste, three piles allow compost to be available year-round if managed to be in various stages of decomposition.

Bin Type

Containers are not necessary. Piles can be placed directly on the ground. However, different types of containers can be made with items on hand or purchased ready-made. Structures should allow for airflow throughout the entire pile and should be open on one side for easy access.

Placement

Place the pile in a shady, well-drained area of the property. Be aware tree roots may grow into the pile, making it difficult to turn and dig in the pile.

About Composting

- Compost forms when materials heat up as microorganisms break down the materials. The process can take from six months to two years to complete depending on several factors.
- Carbon and nitrogen feed the composting process, and the proper ratio of items containing each is needed for compost to form.
- Small materials break down faster. Shred or rip up paper. Chip tree limbs and branches.
- Turn the pile with a pitchfork at least twice a month to supply oxygen and speed up the process.
- Keep it moist, but not wet. Check the pile when turning it. If it is dry, dampen it.

Items that can be composted

- Eggshells
- Bark
- Paper
- Corn cobs
- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Cardboard
- Sawdust
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Hair and fur
- Fireplace ashes (These should be limited.)
- Fish scraps (These may initially have an odor and could attract animals.)

Items that cannot be composted

- Diseased or insect-infested plant material
- Coal or charcoal ash
- Dairy products
- Meat scraps or bones
- Fats, grease, lard, and oil
- Pet wastes, including dog and cat feces and soiled cat litter
- Black walnut leaves or branches
- Yard waste treated with chemical pesticides
- Sawdust or wood shavings treated with preservatives

Soskin explained to Pace that he was eyeing Biloxi as an expansion location for the Federal Prospects Hockey League, an independent entry-level circuit where he already owned two clubs and where Pace had roamed as a player/coach for a decade.

"We didn't know Biloxi was on the coast or anything. I never played here against the Sea Wolves or the Surge," Pace says. "We Googled it, looked up the community, researched the school districts, and when we saw where it was on the map, that interested us."

With Pace and his family relocated to the "Playground of the South," Soskin had a professional hockey "lifer" on the ground. While the last pro hockey team to play at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum, the Mississippi Surge, went out of business in May 2014, true fans always held out hope for a return of their beloved Mississippi Sea Wolves, part of the NHL-affiliated ECHL, tenants of the coliseum for 10 seasons between 1996-2009 and champions in 1999.

The Sea Wolves are back in Biloxi with the 2022-23 season starting in October. Pace is the team's chief operating officer and season tickets went on sale in March.

"Barry wanted a lease right away to (start playing last) October, the coliseum wanted us to test the market," says Pace, who has played in over 450 Federal League games. "We signed a lease for the exhibition games, we moved down, and the first thing I did was get in touch with the people running the Bring Back Our Sea Wolves Facebook page."

In 2022, it's no wonder that social media played a role in bringing the Sea Wolves back to life after 13 years. In minor league sports, it's often the passion of the fans that endures longer than the clubs themselves. It's not unusual for fans of defunct teams to maintain Facebook pages where they can trade stories, photos, and memories of the good old days.



Sea Wolves vs. River Dragons

The crowd during the National Anthem at the Dec. 30, 2021, game at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum. There were 8,646 Sea Wolves fans at full capacity that day. Photo by Tammy Morosko



Pace had previously helped Soskin host FPHL neutral site games to test the viability of other markets, but never while living on-site in the perspective city and never with the robust social media presence that was preexisting in Biloxi. Soskin and Pace borrowed staff from the visiting FPHL teams, from teams in other leagues and relied on fan volunteers to staff the three events in 2021.

Despite being held on two Thursdays and one Friday in December – and not on any Saturdays – the neutral site games left little doubt that hockey would be welcomed back in Biloxi. Each game drew larger crowds than the previous one. About 4,300 tickets were sold for the Dec. 2 game, 7,200 for Dec. 17, and 8,646 on Dec. 30, good for a sellout.

“All the modern technology brings new fans,” says John “Stumpy” Evangelista, a Hurley resident who played parts of six seasons with the original club between 1999-2005.

“I couldn’t be more excited to have hockey back, I’ve only been watching on TV for years.”

Soskin’s teams, the Carolina Thunderbirds of Winston-Salem, North Carolina and the Port Huron Prowlers played as the home team against the Columbus River Dragons in Georgia. Soskin’s clubs quickly earned the hearts of the locals. “Thousands of fans

really stuck to cheering for the home team,” Davis says. “By the third game, the number of Sea Wolves chants almost became annoying.”

While the FPHL is a lower level than past Biloxi teams, the 2021 games were a great showcase for the new Sea Wolves. Pace, still not retired, managed to get into an old-fashioned hockey fight in front of his new hometown fans that has garnered over 5 million views on Facebook. “You can go to your first-ever game and get autographs and pictures with the players,” Pace says. “Game ends, the players are in the lobby or ice skating with the fans, something fans don’t get at the highest level.” ❄️



From left to right: Mississippi Sea Wolves Chief Operations Officer Joe Pace, his wife, Allie Pace; Sea Wolves staffers Jerod Campbell and Kory DuMond. Photo by Tammy Morosko

Matt Caputo is a writer from Queens, New York, with bylines in *The New York Times*, *Connecticut Magazine*, and *The Hockey News*. A student in Western Connecticut State University’s creative writing MFA program, he’s at work on a book about minor league hockey.



Call 228-999-8333 or visit the Sea Wolves offices at 4063 Ginger Drive, Suite D in D'Iberville to buy tickets. Visit mississippiseawolves.com for more information.

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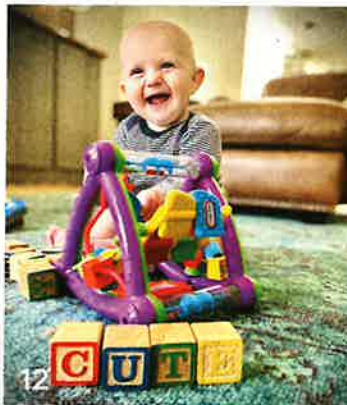
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17. Wyatt Andres, by **Mike Andres** of Ocean Springs; Singing River Electric member.
18. Ava Presley, by **Theresa Crosby** of Hazlehurst; Southern Pine Electric member.
19. Shelby Fraiser, by **Jewel Waters** of Brandon; Central EPA member.
20. Witt Vaughan, by **Tish Vaughan** of McCarley; Delta Electric member.
21. Bradley and Nathah Rogers, by **Kashea Rogers** of Brandon; Central EPA member.
22. Asher Dailey and his dog Maize, by **Taylor Dailey** of Decatur; Southern Pine Electric member.

11. Eli and Micah Smith, by **Charles Smith** of Sturgis; 4-County Electric member.
12. Andrew Thomas Newman, by **Cassie Buford** of Vancleave; Singing River Electric member.
13. Louise Brown's granddaughter, by **Louise Brown** of Perkinston; Pearl River Valley Electric member.
14. Kennedy Reynolds (right) and Kelsey Reynolds, by **Rosena Proffice** of Natchez; Southwest Electric member.
15. Leigh Guess, by **Cassandra Mobley** of Florence; Southern Pine Electric member.
16. Jackson Garner, by **Morgan Garner** of Poplarville; Coast Electric member.

Strawberry Milkshake

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup of milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups strawberries hulled
- 2 cups vanilla ice cream

To hull strawberries, wash, pat dry, and cut off the end, and use a straw to remove the center (hull).

Combine all ingredients in a blender, except milk, and blend well. Add milk to create the desired consistency. You may not need any milk, you may only use a ¼ cup or the whole cup. If you add too much milk, just add more ice cream to thicken it back up.



Strawberry Spinach Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 16 ounce fresh spinach + mixed greens
- 16 ounces fresh strawberries - stems removed, sliced
- ½ cup crumbled cheese (*goat cheese, gorgonzola, blue cheese, or feta*)
- ½ cup chopped pecans
- Favorite balsamic vinegar
- Salt/pepper - to taste

Combine spinach, salad greens, sliced strawberries, cheese, and pecans. Toss with your favorite dressing and serve or, if you prefer, plate salads, and serve dressing on the side.



Strawberry Upside Down Cake

INGREDIENTS

For the topping:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup fresh ripe sliced strawberries

For the batter:

- 1 box strawberry cake mix
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated white sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extra
- 1 cup sour cream
- 4 large egg whites

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

You are going to need a bundt pan or a 9-inch round baking pan. Give the desired cake pan a good coat of nonstick spray.

In a small pot (or in the microwave) melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Add the brown sugar to the butter and mix the two together. Spread the topping you made evenly over the bottom of your cake pan and place your sliced strawberries on top of the topping.

In a large bowl, whisk together cake mix, flour, sugar, and salt. Add remaining ingredients and beat with a hand mixer until well blended.

Pour the cake batter carefully into the pan without moving the fruit on the bottom. Fill the cake pan ¾ way full. (If you use a 9-inch round pan, there's a chance you'll have leftover batter. Make cupcakes, or make an additional smaller cake, just double the topping steps.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Turner is an author, registered dietitian, radio host, television presenter and a certified specialist in sports dietetics with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. A lifelong Mississippian, she lives in Brandon and has spent the last decade offering no-nonsense nutrition guidance that allows you to enjoy good health and good food. Her book, "Mind Over Fork," challenges the way you think, not the way you eat. Find her on social media @RebeccaTurnerNutrition and online at www.RebeccaTurnerNutrition.com.



Family Gathering

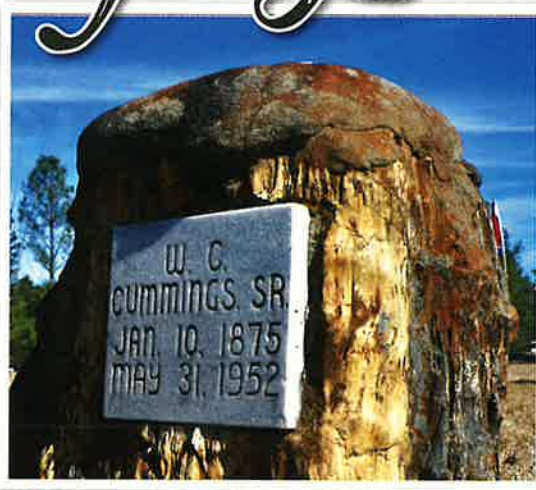
We had another impromptu family reunion a few weeks ago. Another funeral. Only time we can get together anymore, it seems. My brother-in-law passed away. He and my sister had lived in North Carolina for decades. But he was brought back to Mississippi to be buried next to her in the same cemetery where at least six generations of my family are buried.

There are a few things I remember vividly from my early childhood about going to grandma's house at Fulton. The Dr. Pepper sign coming into town. I'd see it and know we were there. Grandma's house itself, of course. And Oak Grove Cemetery at Ratliff. More precisely, Oak Grove is a graveyard. A "cemetery" is a detached place for burials. A "graveyard" is associated with a church — Oak Grove Methodist, in this case, even though most of my family were Baptist.

Anyway, Oak Grove is where we buried my brother-in-law. His funeral was just the latest in a life-long series of caravans out to Oak Grove. As a child, every time we went to grandmother's all of us would drive out to visit the family graves. We're kin to about half of the people buried there.

My affection for cemeteries comes from all those visits when I was a child. I learned that family attachments go way beyond this life and cemeteries are for the living, not the dead. According to our beliefs, those who have passed on aren't there, anyway. We console ourselves by visiting them. And in turn, we want to be buried where people can come visit us.

There is a little house over the grave of one of our distant relatives from the 1800s. She was afraid of storms, and her husband promised that it would never rain on her grave. He built a little house over her when she died. Possibly the only time her grave ever got wet was when the 2014 tornado destroyed the little grave house. The Cemetery Association reproduced it precisely, even milling lumber to exactly match the original boards.



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My granddaddy Cummings has possibly the most fascinating grave marker in Oak Grove. He worked in wood all his life as a timber man and sawmiller. One day, he found a petrified tree stump in a creek bottom and hauled it back up to the house. He told grandmother that since he had worked in wood all his life, it would be fitting to have the wood stump as his grave marker. Grandmother replied, "If that's the case, just take the door off the oven and use it for me when I die."

On our way back home, Miz Jo and I mused over the idea of picking a spot for ourselves and being buried at Oak Grove. Britt Curtiss, overseer of the graveyard, said there are two plots right next to my mom and dad. But Jo said it's a long way up there from where we live for the family to come visit. But we have left kin folks buried behind in many places from which the family has moved on. At least we'd be buried with a lot of other family.

But Jo is still thinking it over. Right now, she likes the new cemetery near our house on Highway 25. I told her, odds are, we wouldn't have family stay here forever, either. She said, "Maybe not. But that cemetery is between our house and Walmart. So, I'd know you'd drive past me a couple of times a day, at least." ❀



by Walt Grayson

Walt Grayson is the host of "Mississippi Roads" on Mississippi Public Broadcasting television and the author of two "Looking Around Mississippi" books and "Oh! That Reminds Me: More Mississippi Homegrown Stories." Walt is also a reporter and 4 p.m. news anchor at WJTV in Jackson. He lives in Brandon and is a Central Electric member. Contact him at walt@waltgrayson.com.